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ABSTRACT

In European cities, ethnic minorities concentrate in physically and socially dilapidated areas, according to two different patterns. In the traditional pattern, ethnic minorities (who are among the lowest socioeconomic status groups) concentrate in the old and dilapidated buildings in inner city areas. Because inner city areas are becoming gentrified, a new pattern is developing now in France, Great Britain, and West Germany: ethnic minorities and other low socioeconomic status groups concentrate in suburban public housing estates built in the 1960s but already dilapidated. This new situation creates specific difficulties, including educational problems. Due to the centralized school system, France had no specific educational provision for ethnic minorities. In the 1980s, some experiments in providing for these groups were launched, most of them in schools in dilapidated housing areas. It was taken for granted that ethnic minority school children, because of language barriers, needed extra help. A striking result is that ethnic minority children now often have higher levels of academic achievement than the other children, who are now the ones who need extra help. An explanation for this may lie in the family structure: in these areas, the "white" population is of very low socioeconomic status, stable families are rare, and parents have low expectations of their children's academic performance. On the other hand, ethnic minority families are more stable and expect their children to do well in school. A list of references is included. (BJV)

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Maurice BLANC:

THE MULTI-ETHNIC EUROPEAN CITY AND EDUCATIONAL PROVISION.

Paper presented at the Symposium: "Ethnic Heterogeneity in Schools"

at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

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A B S T R A C T :

I. HOUSING SEGREGATIONS IN FRANCE, GREAT-BRITAIN AND WEST-GERMANY:

In European cities, ethnic minorities concentrate in physically and socially dilapidated areas, according to two different patterns:
- In the traditional pattern, ethnic minorities (as a part of the lowest socio-economic status groups) concentrate in the old and dilapidated buildings in inner city areas.
- A new pattern is occuring now in France, and to a lesser extent in G.-Britain and W.-Germany: inner city areas are gentrifying, and ethnic minorities and other low socio-economic status groups are numerous in suburban public housing estates built in the sixties and already dilapidated. This new situation creates specific problems, among them the school system.

II. EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN FRANCE:

Due to the centralized school system, France has had no specific educational provision for ethnic minorities. In the eighties, some experiments giving specific educational provision for ethnic minorities were launched, most of them in schools in dilapidated public housing areas. It was taken for granted that ethnic minorities school children needed extra help related with language problems.
A striking result is that ethnic minorities school children are often doing better than their "white" schoolmates, who have a more urgent need of extra help. The explanation may be linked with the family structure: in these areas, the "white" population is of very low socio-economic status, stable families are rare, and they have very little expectations from school. On the other hand, ethnic minorities families are more stable, they expect much from school, and they require good results in school from their children.

INTRODUCTION:

First, I want to thank Professor Eggleston for inviting me, as an urban sociologist, to this Symposium: he is aware that ethnic heterogeneity is not only an educational problem, but also an urban problem.

The title of my paper: "The Multi-ethnic European City and Educational Provision" is quite large, and I have to make the following restrictions:
- I am doing a comparative study on the housing situation of ethnic minorities in 3 European countries: France, Great-Britain and West-Germany. Here, in my first part on housing segregations, I shall focus on these three countries, but I assume that the situation is about the same in other industrialized European countries.
- As far as educational provision is concerned, I can speak only for France, and I shall report on an ongoing experiment in my home city, Nancy; in this experiment, unexpected results are coming out, and it is open to discussion whether or not they can be generalized.

The words we are using are far from neutral. According to Anglo-American standards, every European industrialized country has minority groups "identified by their appearance and their exotic-seeming customs" (Glenn, 1988:21; see also Rex, 1986), predominantly employed as unqualified industrial workers. Nevertheless, with the noticeable exceptions of Great-Britain and to a lesser extent of the Netherlands, European countries are reluctant in considering themselves as multi-ethnic. They speak of foreigners, guestworkers and/or immigrants, never of ethnic minorities. In France and in W.-Germany, it is usual to speak of "immigrants of the second (or third) generation", although they are no longer "immigrants". But "ethnic minority" is a controversial expression also: ethnicity is an euphemism for race which has become taboo, but the scientific status is no better (Wallman,). Furthermore, "ethnic minority" is a single-oriented definition: "the majority of the population tends to consider themselves as a reference group, so that they do not identify themselves primarily as an ethnic group, except in a confrontation with minorities" (DeRudder, 1987:23). However, in an European overview, it is better (or less worse) to use ethnic minorities than foreigners or immigrants: when they acquire the French nationality and are no longer foreigners, North

Africans still have to face the same discriminations as earlier. As a matter of fact, in French school statistics, "many students of foreign origin, but with French nationality and citizenship, are wrongly classified as foreigners" (Le Monde, 28.1.1988).

I. HOUSING SEGREGATIONS IN FRANCE, GREAT-BRITAIN AND W.-GERMANY:

In European cities, ethnic minorities concentrate in physically and socially dilapidated areas, according to two different patterns: in the traditional pattern in inner city areas, and in a new pattern in suburban large public housing estates (Blanc, 1984).

A. The inner city:

1. The concentration of ethnic minorities in the inner city:

I shall be brief as this traditional pattern is well known in America also. Ethnic minorities tend to concentrate in bad quality housing in inner city areas, together with an indigenous population of the same low socio-economic status. This situation is the result of several reasons:

a)- Ethnic minorities "choose" old housing for its (relatively) low cost.

b)- They have a limited access to public housing by lack of information on their rights to it, because public housing has nothing suitable for their large families, and last but not least because local authorities tend to give a preference to the indigenous population (De Rudder, 1985).

c)- As it is a dilapidated area, ethnic minorities have more freedom for adapting space according to their own ways of life and their cultures. They create a social network, in which trade of products from home plays an important role. The community is very helpful for new comers who are needing this stage before finding out their way of insertion into the "host" society (Pétonnet, 1982; De Rudder, 1987).

2. The changes in European inner cities:

a)- When the private sector is taking the initiative of improving housing in inner city areas, the rents are increasing and the residents of low socio-economic status (among them ethnic minorities) cannot afford to pay them. They have to move into a cheaper housing. In this way, there is a

gentrification of some inner city areas (Marin, 1984), forcing ethnic minorities and poor to move out.

b)- In the sixties, public urban renewal programmes contributed sometimes to gentrification. But their main concern was restructuring the inner city and that meant:

- The creation of new streets and avenues for improving the traffic.
- The building of central business districts (Castells, 1973).

In the three countries local authorities were compelled by law of rehousing the former residents. Specifically in France, they have built at the same time suburban public housing estates. This is the starting point of a new development, where ethnic minorities and poor have to move from the center to the suburbs, but it will not take immediately a massive form (see below).

c)- In the seventies, the urban renewal programmes were given up. In the three countries, public intervention is concerned with housing improvement schemes allowing the residents to stay in the inner city. There are some important distinctions in the procedures from one country to another (Blanc, 1988), but the hard fact is that these policies are not very successful in keeping ethnic minorities who cannot afford to pay more in an improved housing in the inner city. In some cases in France, "the unexpressed aim of the housing improvement scheme was a decrease of the foreigner population" (Mollet,1987:23).

B. Ethnic minorities in the suburbs:

As a consequence of the decrease trend of ethnic minorities in the inner city, a new trend is the concentration of ethnic minorities in some suburbs, and specifically in dilapidated public housing estates built in the sixties (Blanc, 1985).

1. An unequal development from one country to another:

a)- It is very visible in France, where immigrant (ethnic minority) housing is usually associated with public housing, and this is a growing problem for national and local authorities, and for social scientists as well. Next month (May 1988), a Conference on: "Ethnic Minorities Suburbs and Urban Management" shall take place in Grenoble, and it is a good sign of the emergence of a new concern.

b)- It applies very little in Great-Britain where, with the exception of London (which is not neglectable!), "Council housing" and "large outer estates" are not equivalent as they are in French. A significant part of Council housing in Britain is in the inner city, which is not the case in France. Furthermore, in Liverpool and other cities, the worst outer estates have been rapidly distroyed. Among other consequences, suburbs in Great-Britain are still predominantly white and middle-class.

c)- West Germany has very strong regional differences, and it is in an intermediate position between France and Great-Britain:
- In a social-democrat Land (State) as Hamburg, the situation is very similar to the French one: there are many suburban large public estates having a high rate of ethnic minorities, and of vacancies.
- But cities as Stuttgart and Munich have very little public housing estates. As in Great-Britain, ethnic minorities concentrate in inner city areas. Even in Berlin, which has important public housing estates, ethnic minorities live in the inner city.

2. The rise of the suburban large public estates in France:

The suburban public housing estates were built in France in the sixties, when France was going through a severe housing crisis. In order to meet the urgent needs, the policy aimed to build rapidly numerous and cheap housing. Suburbs were chosen because the ground is cheaper, and it allowed the use of new industrialized building processes on a large scale. As already mentioned, ethnic minorities have had at first a very limited access in these new housing estates.

3. The crisis of the suburban public estates:

a)- A new housing policy: in the early seventies, a new housing policy was set up in France, giving up the construction of new large housing estates, and encouraging the purchase of one's own individual property. Financial incentives for families with children and a relatively low but stable income made them eligible: they could afford an industrialized one-family house in a suburban estate. As a result, significant numbers of upper working class and lower middle class families left the large public estates. High rates of vacancies appeared in the most dilapidated of them.

b)- A new immigration policy: at the same time, and all over Europe, the economic crisis led to drastic restrictions for immigration, and they had totally unexpected consequences. It created such a climate of insecurity among foreign workers that they were afraid of losing the right of reentering the country where they have their jobs when spending their holidays at home. For that reason, a majority of them decided to stay, and called their families to join them.

c)- The settlement of ethnic minorities in French public housing estates: When a foreigner is asking for a permit to stay for his family, he has invariably to prove that he lives in good housing conditions, and the coincidence of two independent logics has played a big role:
- The foreign worker is looking for a "decent" and cheap housing, and he applies for a public housing.
- At the same time, Housing Departments in France are worried about their vacancy rate, and they are glad to welcome tenants accepting what others refuse, and paying regularly their rents.
Ethnic minorities of North-African origin are over-represented in some large public housing estates and they are very "visible", but they do not form the majority. Some efficient conservative press campaigns have succeeded in convincing their audience, and many local authorities too, that the French population is deserting public housing because too many ethnic minorities are living there. The reality is much more simple and trivial: French families who could afford better housing conditions have done it (Blanc, 1985). But the fact remains that in such large housing estates the schools have to cope with a very serious challenge and they are not prepared to it: ethnic heterogeneity.

II. EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN FRANCE:

1. The historical context:

In France, school has been a tool for creating national unity and identity. French has been promoted the language of the Republic, and therefore the language of progress and democracy. Traditionally, the school has been fighting the use of dialects and foreign languages, and children were punished if they spoke anything else than French, even in the playgrounds.

The training of the teachers did not prepare them being sensitive to the educational needs of ethnic minorities school children. As John Eggleston expresses it: "It is believed that adjustment should be made, and made willingly, by the new minority groups" (1988:18). The main concern was to help ethnic minorities mastering French as soon as possible.

2. The educational needs of ethnic minorities:

Without pretending to exhaustivity, I can emphasize:

a)- The teaching of the mother tongue: In most cases, but specifically when parents had the project of "returning" in their home countries, their main concern was to teach their children their own language. Churches and foreign governments have tried to meet this need with evening or Sunday classes, but independently from schools and without coordination with them. In some cases, conflicts occurred, when political opponents accused the teacher paid by the Embassy of giving their children an idealized view of the lost country.

b)- Learning French efficiently: Many ethnic minorities school children fail at school, or drop out, first of all because they have an insufficient mastery of French. The traditional teaching assumed that foreigners learn French through contacts with their French schoolmates, and it does not work any longer when ethnic minorities are the majority. If, as previously said, there is in France no district with a majority of ethnic minorities residents, the case occurs in some schools receiving children from large public housing estates for two main reasons:
- Ethnic minorities families have often numerous children.
- French middle-class parents tend to put their children in other schools with a better reputation.

3. The answers of the school system:

The school system has been slow in answering these needs:

a)- For the teaching of the mother tongue, little has been done yet. There are local experiments depending on the good will and the motivation of the teachers as well as of the community. In order to prepare the integration in the EEC, there are more experiments for learning German in the kindergarten than for learning (or improving) Arabic at the same age!

b)- For school children arriving in France with no knowledge of French, or an insufficient one for being in class with regular school children of their age, special classes have been set up. It is emphasized that the stay in such classes should be as short as possible, the aim is to prepare these children for joining the school of their district.

c)- For the teachers, has been organized in-service training in teaching French as a second language.

4. The Programme of the "Zones d'Education Prioritaire (ZEP)" or Priority Educational Areas:

In the eighties, in order to reduce school drop out, a programme was launched in schools of dilapidated public housing areas, usually linked with an urban programme for improving these public housing estates. Schools were invited to implement new activities answering the educational needs of the neighbourhood. It is important to note that the reference is the neighbourhood and not the community, even if ethnic groups are important among the neighbourhood. The school administration fears the criticism of doing more for ethnic minorities than for "whites". Except for the teaching of French whose legitimacy is unquestionnable, there is only an indirect answer to the needs of ethnic groups, and with little publicity.

5. An experiment of extra help for the home work:

I report now on a going on experiment in which I am involved. It is a small part of the ZEP programme in a large public estate of Nancy. Considering that ethnic minorities school children in this area needed extra help because of their linguistic problems, a project was funded by the Fonds d'Action Sociale which is the funding body of social work for immigrants. The project is working on a volutary basis, and school children do come after school if they want to receive some help. After the first

school year, an evaluation was made and it showed unexpected results: ethnic minorities school children are doing better than their "white" schoolmates, who have a more urgent need of extra help. In order to understand this paradoxical result, we have to refer to the sociological background of this large public housing estate. As previously said, the "white" population living here is of a very low socio-economic status and has no other housing choice. Stable families are rare, and they have very little expectations from school. On the other hand, ethnic minorities families are more stable and structured. They expect much from school (Eggleston, 1988:4) and, even if parents cannot help their children with their home work, they require from them good results at school.

I do not want to generalize from a single case, but it suggests there is a danger in overemphasizing ethnicity, and that we have to look at the social class issue also when educational provision is concerned. From a practical point of view, it raises another question: This project is working well and should be continued, but who should fund it as ethnic minorities school children are no longer the ones who need it?

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